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ABSTRACT

This study compared crime rates of the United States with those of other countries for whom statistics were available: European countries, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Statistics were provided by the United Nations for homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, and theft; the International Police Organization (Interpol) for homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, and auto theft, and the World Health Organization (WHO) for homicide. Based on these statistics, the rate of violent crime in the United States was found to be several times higher than the rates in other countries for which information was available. The rate of property crime in the United Staes was also higher than in the majority of these countries. Crimes of violence (homicide, rape, and robbery) were 4-9 times more frequent in the United States than they were in Europe; crimes of theft (burglary, theft, auto theft) were also more frequent, but not to the same degree. Between 1980 and 1984 the difference between crime rates for the United States and for other countries narrowed because the United States' rate decreased while other countries' rates increased. Crime rates from country to country were difficult to compare because of differences in criminal justice systems, in definitions of crime, in crime reporting practices and recordkeeping, and in methods of reporting statistics to international agencies. To reduce this variability, more than one data source was used whenever possible and European countries were averaged together, as were Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. (Twelve tables provide statistics for particular crimes in selected countries.) (ABL)

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U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Statistics

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# Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

# International Crime Rates

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May 1988

Based upon data on crimes reported to law enforcement authorities collected by the United Nations (UN) and the International Police Organization (Interpol) and upon data from the World Health Organization (WHO), the rate of violent crime in the United States is several times higher than in other countries for which information is available. The rate of property crime in the United States is also higher than in the majority of these countries.

Crimes of violence (homicide, rape, and robbery) are 4-9 times more frequent in the United States than they are in Europe; crimes of theft (burglary, theft, and auto theft) are also more frequent, but not to the same degree. However, between 1980 and 1984 the difference between U.S. crime rates and rates for other countries narrowed because U.S. crime rates decreased while rates for other countries generally increased.

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This study was originally intended to include the 20 countries of the world with populations of 50 million or more; all other countries in North America, South America, and Europe; and Australia and New Zealand--a total of 62 countries. Only 41 countries in these categories provided data to at least 1 of the 3 international organizations that collect information on crime.

The study focused on the crimes of homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, theft, and auto theft because these crimes are most likely to be understood and defined in the same general way from country to country. The UN provided statistics on homicide, rape, robbery, and theft (including burglary and auto theft); Interpol, on homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, and auto theft; and WHO, on homicide.

This Special Report is the second in a series of publications on international criminal justice statistics and cross-national comparisons. The report brings together all of the international statistical series on crime rates from 1980 to 1984 for a large number of countries. This is the first time these data have been collected into one document, and we hope that it will be of assistance to criminal justice professionals and researchers.

This report assesses the available international statistical series in terms of their completeness, comparability, and accuracy. It also compares U.S. crime rates with those of other countries. The overall higher rates for the United States, especially for crimes of violence, warrant further investigation.

The results of this report suggest that much needs to be done to improve the quality of international crime statistics. A great deal, however, can be accomplished with a modest investment of effort. The consequent improvements in our ability to compare crime rates among nations will be well worth that investment.

Steven R. Schlesinger
Director

Crime rates from country to country are difficult to compare because of differences in criminal justice systems, in definitions of crime, in crime reporting practices and recordkeeping, and in methods of reporting statistics to international agencies. Two techniques were used to reduce some of the effects of this variability. First, more than one data source was used whenever possible. Second, for purposes of direct comparison with the United States, all European countries in each data set were averaged together, and a second group--Canada, Australia, and New Zealand--were also averaged when data were reported for at least two of these countries.

## Overall comparisons

U.S. crime rates for the three violent crimes studied were several times higher than the averages for reporting European countries. The U.S. homicide rate per 100,000 persons in the population ranged from 10.5 (WHO 1980) to 7.9 (Interpol 1984); the rate of homicide in Europe from all 3 sources was less than 2 per 100,000 (table 1).

The U.S. crime rate for rape was around 36 per 100,000, roughly 7 times higher than the average for Europe. Each data source showed U.S. crime rates for robbery at more than 200 per 100,000, compared to European rates of less than 50 per 100,000.

For the crimes of theft and auto theft the ratio of U.S. rates to average European rates was roughly 2 to 1. Burglary was the only crime examined for which U.S. rates were less than double those for European countries.

The U.S. rates for violent crime were also higher than those of the second group (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), but the differences were smaller, compared to Europe. For burglary and auto theft the rates were quite similar. In fact, 1984 Interpol data show a burglary rate for the combined group that is about 40% higher than the U.S. rate.

**Table 1. Summary data on international crime rates**

| Crime and data series | Number of crimes per 100,000 population: United States | Europe[a] | Canada, Australia, and New Zealand[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Homicide (excluding attempts)** | | | |
| WHO 1980 | 10.5 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| UN 1980 | 10.1 | 1.3 | ... |
| Interpol 1980 | 10.0 | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| Interpol 1984 | 7.9 | 1.5 | 2.2[b] |
| **Rape** | | | |
| UN 1980 | 36.0 | 5.0 | ... |
| Interpol 1980 | 36.0 | 4.2 | 10.5 |
| Interpol 1984 | 35.7 | 5.4 | 14.1[c] |
| **Robbery** | | | |
| UN 1980 | 240.9 | 25.4 | ... |
| Interpol 1980 | 244.0 | 38.4 | 56.4 |
| Interpol 1984 | 205.4 | 49.1 | 63.8 |
| **Burglary** | | | |
| Interpol 1980 | 1,669.0 | 893.1 | 1,498.4 |
| Interpol 1984 | 1,263.7 | 1,055.3 | 1,806.0 |
| **Theft** | | | |
| UN 1980 | 5,262.2 | 2,086.8 | ... |
| **Auto theft** | | | |
| Interpol 1980 | 495.0 | 233.8 | 418.6[d] |
| Interpol 1984 | 437.1 | 221.8 | 444.8[d] |

[a]Rates represent averages for reporting countries; Interpol data for 1980 and 1984 are not directly comparable since identical sets of countries did not report for both years; see tables 8 through 12.
[b]Does not include Australia.
[c]Does not include Canada.
[d]Does not include New Zealand.

Sources: World Health Organization, World Health Statistics Annual, vols. 1982-86; Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84; United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987.

Between 1980 and 1984 the crime rate in the United States dropped for each crime studied except rape (table 2). The decreases were sizable, ranging from 12% for auto theft to 24% for burglary. In contrast, the average crime rates for Europe and for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand increased for all crimes except homicide, for which there were insufficient data to make reliable comparisons. In most cases the increases experienced by European countries and by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were larger than the decreases in the United States. These countertrends significantly reduced the differences between the crime rates of the United States and those of the other countries.

**Table 2. Trends in international crime rates, 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Crime | Percent change in crime rates, 1980-84: United States | Europe | Canada, Australia, and New Zealand |
|---|---|---|---|
| Homicide (excluding attempts) | -21% | ... | ... |
| Rape | 0 | 19% | 63%[a] |
| Robbery | -16 | 50 | 13 |
| Burglary | -24 | 40 | 21 |
| Auto theft | -12 | 13 | 6[b] |

Note: Data for Europe and for Canada/Australia/New Zealand include only countries reporting data for both 1980 and 1984. Percent change was calculated by computing the average rate for each year and then comparing the yearly averages.

...Not available; too few countries reporting for both 1980 and 1984.
[a]Does not include Canada.
[b]Does not include New Zealand.

## Comparisons with individual countries

In comparing homicide rates of individual countries with that of the United States, WHO is the best source because its data are based on an actual count of deceased persons. Homicide rates for the countries in the study reporting to WHO ranged from .7 per 100,000 to 25.1 per 100,000 (table 3). The U.S. rate of 10.5 per 100,000 was the second highest reported. Two-thirds of the countries had rates under 2 per 100,000. Central and South American countries seemed to have somewhat higher rates than other countries, but so few reported that this may not be representative of the whole region.

**Table 3. Homicide in selected countries, rates for 1980: World Health Organization data**

| Country | Number of actual homicides per 100,000 population |
|---|---|
| United States | 10.5 |
| Australia | 1.2 |
| Austria | 1.2 |
| Canada | 2.1 |
| Chile | 2.6 |
| Costa Rica | 5.8 |
| Czechoslovakia | 1.1* |
| Denmark | 1.3 |
| Ecuador | 6.0* |
| Egypt | .9 |
| England and Wales | .8 |
| Finland | 3.3 |
| France | 1.0 |
| Germany (FRG) | 1.2 |
| Greece | .7 |
| Hungary | 2.6 |
| Ireland | .7 |
| Italy | 1.9* |
| Japan | 1.0 |
| Luxembourg | 1.9 |
| Netherlands | .8 |
| New Zealand | 1.3 |
| Norway | 1.1 |
| Panama | 2.2 |
| Portugal | 1.3 |
| Scotland | 1.6 |
| Spain | 1.0 |
| Sweden | 1.2 |
| Thailand | 25.1 |
| Venezuela | 9.7* |
| Yugoslavia | 1.7 |

*1981 data.
Source: World Health Organization, World Health Statistics Annual, vols. 1982-86.

The most recent information available on international crime rates is the 1984 Interpol data (table 4). Thirty-two countries reported to Interpol for 1984, but not every country reported every crime. The U.S. rates reflect the downward trend in crime that occurred here during the first part of the 1980's. Even so, the United States had rates substantially higher than the other countries for the crimes of homicide, rape, and robbery.

Although it is at the high end of the range for auto theft, the United States does not have the highest rate; the U.S. rate for burglary is approximately in the middle of the range.

For each crime except burglary, more than half the countries reporting had crime rates that were less than half those of the United States.

**Table 4. Crime rates in selected countries, 1984: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of crimes per 100,000 population | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Homicides | | | | | |
| | Actual | Including attempts | Rape | Robbery | Burglary | Auto theft |
| United States | 7.9 | ... | 35.7 | 205.4 | 1,263.7 | 437.1 |
| Australia | ... | 3.4 | 13.8 | 83.6 | 1,754.3 | 584.7 |
| Austria | 1.3 | 2.4 | 5.3 | 29.8 | 805.8 | 16.9 |
| Belgium | ... | 3.3 | 5.8 | 50.0 | ... | 140.6 |
| Canada | 2.7 | 6.3 | ... | 92.8 | 1,420.6 | 304.9 |
| Chile | 5.8 | 6.3 | 10.6 | 36.4 | ... | 7.6 |
| Colombia | ... | 3.5 | 4.4 | 32.8 | ... | 14.2 |
| Denmark | 1.2 | 5.8 | 7.7 | 35.6 | 2,230.2 | 469.5 |
| Ecuador | ... | 4.5 | 5.9 | 22.8 | ... | 7.8 |
| Egypt | 1.0 | 1.5 | ... | .4 | ... | 3.3 |
| England and Wales | 1.1[a] | 1.4[a] | 2.7[a] | 44.6[a] | 1,639.7[a] | 656.6[a] |
| Finland | 2.3 | 5.6 | 6.5 | 33.7 | 772.6 | 171.7 |
| France | ... | 4.6 | 5.2 | 105.6 | 809.8 | 483.4 |
| Germany (FRG) | 1.5 | 4.5 | 9.7 | 45.8 | 1,554.1 | 118.0 |
| Greece | 1.0 | 1.8 | .9 | 2.3 | 72.8 | ... |
| Hungary | 1.9 | 3.7 | 6.1 | 15.5 | 211.0 | 4.0 |
| Indonesia | ... | .9 | 1.2 | 5.1 | 38.4 | 4.9 |
| Ireland | .8 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 5.4 | 1,056.8 | 29.7 |
| Italy | 2.1[a] | 5.3[a] | 1.8[a] | 35.7[a] | ... | 276.3 |
| Japan | .8 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 231.2 | 29.4 |
| Luxembourg | ... | 5.3 | 2.8 | 40.8 | 509.8 | 109.3 |
| Monaco | ... | ... | ... | 43.2 | 500.0 | 176.3 |
| Netherlands | 1.2 | ... | 7.2 | 52.9 | 2,328.7 | 155.9 |
| New Zealand | 1.7 | 2.5 | 14.4 | 14.9 | 2,243.1 | ... |
| Nigeria | 1.5[a] | 1.7[a] | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Northern Ireland | 4.0[a] | 19.8[a] | 5.0[a] | 119.3[a] | 1,360.7[a] | 106.2[a] |
| Norway | ... | .9[a] | 4.2[a] | ... | ... | 273.1[a] |
| Philippines | ... | 42.5 | 2.6 | 33.0 | ... | 2.0 |
| Portugal | 3.0 | 4.6 | 2.0 | 21.6 | 99.7 | 61.3 |
| Scotland | ... | 1.4 | 4.4 | 86.9 | 2,178.6 | 632.7 |
| Spain | ... | 2.2 | 3.6 | 147.3 | 1,069.9 | 278.2 |
| Sweden | 1.4 | 5.7 | 11.9 | 44.1 | 1,708.8 | 460.0 |
| Switzerland | 1.1 | 2.2 | 5.8 | 24.2 | 276.8 | ...[b] |
| Thailand | ... | 16.6 | 5.3 | 10.0 | 8.7 | 2.0 |
| Venezuela | ... | 9.9 | 17.4 | 161.0 | ... | 85.9 |

...Not available.
[a]1983 data.
[b]Auto theft in Switzerland omitted because it includes bicycles.

Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1983-84.

### Comparison of data sources

Interpol and the UN are the only international organizations that collect annual crime statistics from a large number of countries. Data are collected by the police in member nations. (In the United States such data are provided by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports.) WHO, although it is not an agency with a direct interest in crime, collects annual data on causes of death, including homicide, from public health agencies. The use of WHO data permits the comparison of homicide rates from three different sources.

Interpol crime data are collected annually but published biennially. The most recently published data are for 1984. Interpol has a membership of 145 countries, but during the 1980-84 period no more than 85 countries reported their crime statistics in any single year.

The UN crime survey was conducted in 1983 and collected information for 1975-80 from 50 of the 154 member nations. (Another UN survey, which will be conducted this year, will collect data on the 1980-86 period.) The survey asked questions about all sectors of the criminal justice system and about crime control, as well as about the level of crime. The UN survey combines theft, burglary, and auto theft into a single category.

The advantage of comparing crime rates from different international data sources is that this provides a way of checking the reliability of reported crime rates. Many countries, however, reported to none or at most to one of the series. In general, relatively small countries were more likely to report to Interpol, the UN, and WHO than larger ones, and socialist countries were less likely to report than nonsocialist countries.

Although the United Kingdom has been counted as one country in terms of country coverage, the differing criminal justice systems in England and Wales, in Scotland, and in Northern Ireland necessitate separate reporting of crime rates.

### Definitional problems in comparing crime rates among nations

One of the greatest difficulties in making international comparisons of crime rates is the different crime definitions that are used both among different nations and among the available data sources. For international comparisons of crime rates to have validity, however, it is essential for crime definitions to be similar.

Most countries collect crime statistics in categories that reflect their legal code and their cultural mores.

When faced with a questionnaire with somewhat different crime definitions than those used in their countries, respondents can do little more than record their own crime categories and point out where differences arise.

The differences in crime definitions from country to country are much greater than the differences in definitions used by the three data sources. Thus, clear and complete explanations of definitional differences among countries in crime categories are essential to any meaningful assessment of differences in crime rates. Essential explanatory notes, however, are not consistently reported in either the Interpol or the UN survey reports. An explanation for a particular crime in a given country may be reported in the Interpol data for one year but not for another. This report assumes that any explanatory notes for a given crime apply to that country's data for all years. Definitional explanations for a particular country that appear in Interpol data but not in UN data, or vice versa, are assumed to apply to the country in both data sets.

Both the Interpol and the UN questionnaires asked respondent countries to include attempted crimes in the count of total crimes for each offense. Interpol also asked respondents to report for each offense the percentage of total crimes that were attempts. The UN survey asked that for each offense the number of attempted crimes be shown separately as well. Many countries, however, did not report separately on attempts.

With all the definitional differences among countries, rate comparisons must be made cautiously. Rates within a few points of each other should be viewed as roughly equivalent. Rates for a single country that vary markedly from one source to another should be viewed cautiously. When a country's rates are quite similar for all three data sources, whatever is being measured is probably being measured in approximately the same way each time.

*Homicide*

Interpol defines murder as "any act performed with the purpose of taking human life, in whatever circumstances. This definition excludes abortion but includes infanticide" (emphasis in the original).

The UN defines intentional homicide as death purposely inflicted by another person including infanticide. In the UN survey some countries reported a larger number for attempted homicide than they did for total homicide (attempts plus completed crimes). Where this occurred, it was assumed that the respondent had interpreted the request for the total number of homicides as a request for completed homicides only. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, actual homicide rates were based on the smaller figure, but total homicide rates (actual and attempted) were based on the sum of the two. This error in reporting raises the possibility that other countries may have made the same mistake, but if they reported no figure for attempted homicide there is no way the error can be detected in the data.

WHO defines homicide as death by injury purposely inflicted by others. The WHO definition makes no distinction between intentional and unintentional homicide. It excludes attempts, however, because in health statistics homicide is a subcategory of total deaths.

In an earlier definition "death by legal intervention" was included. This phrase covered deaths that resulted from police activities but did not cover legal executions. Four countries--Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden--reported their 1980 WHO data under this earlier definition.

The definition of homicide used in the United States excludes attempts. These offenses are counted as assaults in the Uniform Crime Reports. The reason for this is that one cannot know with certainty that an act is homicidal in intent unless it is successful. The United States appears to be the only country to classify homicide in this manner. This raises the question of how other countries draw the distinction between homicide and serious assault.

Japan classifies assault that results in death as assault, not homicide, but Japan classifies as homicide the preparation for the commission of a homicide and the participation in a suicide. Czechoslovakia classifies rape that results in the death of the victim as rape, not as homicide. These definitional differences would tend to lower the crime rates for these countries compared to the United States.

Another major definitional difference for which no adjustments could be made is the inclusion of unintentional homicide with intentional homicide. Three countries--France, West Germany, and the Netherlands--reported to the UN that they combined intentional and unintentional homicide. They did not report this to Interpol, even though Interpol, like the UN, had requested intentional homicide only.

The effect of most definitional differences on homicide rates, though, is small compared to the treatment of attempted homicide. For this reason attempted homicides were removed from homicide rates wherever possible to aid comparison among countries.

If each country had reported completely to each international organization, five separate measures of its homicide rate would have been provided (table 5). The three measures of actual homicides should be nearly the same, as should the two measures combining actual and attempted homicides. In addition, a country's rate for actual and attempted homicides combined should be greater than its rate for actual homicides alone. Finally, because the WHO rate for actual homicide is based on a count of deceased persons, it should not be larger than the Interpol rate or the UN rate for actual homicide. Few countries met this standard. On the other hand, relatively few departed from it to such an extent that it was clear that the data were seriously in error.

*Rape*

Interpol defines a sex offense category that includes rape as follows: "Each country should use the definitions in its own laws to determine whether or not an act is a sex offense; rape shall always be included in this category." It then asks countries also to report rape separately, but it does not define the term. Interpol leaves the matter of statutory rape to each country. The UN defines rape as "sexual intercourse without valid consent," which includes statutory rape.

Few individual countries provided explanatory notes for rape. None provided any to Interpol. Egypt reported sexual offenses including rape but did not provide separate figures for rape. Norway and the United States reported to the UN that their figures did not include statutory rape; Belize noted that rape included indecent assault; and Greece reported that the rape category included "lewdness, sodomy, seduction of a child, incest, prostitution, and procuring."

**Table 5. Homicide in selected countries, rates for 1980: Comparison of data sources**

| Country | Number of homicides per 100,000 population: Actual homicides: World Health Organization | Actual homicides: Interpol | Actual homicides: United Nations | Attempted and actual homicides: Interpol | Attempted and actual homicides: United Nations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 10.5 | 10.0 | 10.1 | ... | ... |
| Australia | 1.2 | 2.5 | ... | 3.1 | ... |
| Austria | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Canada | 2.1 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 6.0 | 5.4 |
| Chile | 2.6 | 5.7 | ... | 6.1 | 13.8 |
| Costa Rica | 5.8 | 4.5 | 2.7 | 6.5 | 5.8 |
| Czechoslovakia | 1.1[a] | ... | ... | .2[a] | .7 |
| Denmark | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 4.5 | 4.6 |
| Ecuador | 6.0[a] | ... | ... | .2[a] | ... |
| Egypt | .9 | 2.1 | ... | 2.2 | ... |
| England and Wales | .8 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| Finland | 3.3 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 5.3 | 5.3 |
| France | 1.0 | ... | ... | 3.9 | ... |
| Germany (FRG) | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Greece | .7 | .7 | ... | .9 | 1.2 |
| Hungary | 2.6 | ... | ... | 3.5 | ... |
| Ireland | .7 | ... | .4 | .6 | .6 |
| Italy | 1.9[a] | 1.4[a] | 2.0 | 3.3[a] | 3.5 |
| Japan | 1.0 | .8 | ... | 1.4 | ... |
| Netherlands | .8 | ... | ... | 10.7 | 10.6 |
| New Zealand | 1.3 | 1.7 | ... | 2.2 | ... |
| Norway | 1.1 | ... | ... | .8 | .8 |
| Panama | 2.2 | ... | ... | ... | 9.6 |
| Portugal | 1.3 | 1.6[a] | 1.8 | 3.2[a] | 3.7 |
| Scotland | 1.6 | ... | 1.1 | 1.3 | 6.6 |
| Spain | 1.0 | ... | ... | 1.2 | .1 |
| Sweden | 1.2 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 4.7 | 4.7 |
| Thailand | 25.1 | ... | ... | 18.3[b] | ... |
| Venezuela | 9.7[a] | ... | ... | 13.5 | ... |
| Yugoslavia | 1.7 | ... | ... | ... | 6.0 |

Note: Homicide excluding attempts was recalculated from original data whenever possible.
...Not available.
[a]1981 data.
[b]1983 data.

Sources: World Health Organization, World Health Statistics Annual, vols. 1982-86; Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84; United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987.

**Table 6. Rape in selected countries, rates for 1980: UN and Interpol data**

| Country | Number of rapes per 100,000 population: UN | Interpol |
|---|---|---|
| United States | 36.0 | 36.0 |
| Australia | ... | 7.7 |
| Austria | 7.5 | 5.2 |
| Belgium | ... | .7 |
| Belize | 17.7 | ... |
| Canada | 9.6 | 14.1 |
| Chile | 34.2 | 12.1 |
| Colombia | 8.6 | 6.0 |
| Costa Rica | 13.5 | 9.9 |
| Czechoslovakia | 2.9 | ... |
| Denmark | 6.3 | 7.0 |
| Ecuador | ... | .6* |
| England and Wales | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Finland | 7.7 | 7.7 |
| France | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Germany (FRG) | 11.2 | 11.2 |
| Greece | 5.3 | 1.0 |
| Hungary | ... | 4.4 |
| India | ... | .7 |
| Indonesia | ... | 1.5 |
| Ireland | 1.4 | 1.4 |
| Italy | 3.3 | 1.1* |
| Japan | ... | .2 |
| Netherlands | 5.6 | 5.6 |
| New Zealand | ... | 9.6 |
| Nigeria | ... | 4.3 |
| Northern Ireland | 3.1 | 4.2 |
| Norway | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Panama | 10.2 | ... |
| Peru | ... | 2.3 |
| Philippines | ... | 1.2 |
| Poland | 4.4 | ... |
| Portugal | 1.2 | 1.5* |
| Scotland | 5.9 | 3.2 |
| Spain | 2.5 | 2.3 |
| Sweden | 10.6 | 10.6 |
| Venezuela | ... | 15.6 |
| Yugoslavia | 8.5 | ... |

...Not available.
*1981 data.
Sources: United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987; Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80.

Nine European countries and the United States reported identical rates for rape in 1980 to both the UN and to Interpol (table 6). It appears that in both cases they simply reported their official rape statistic for that year. If the official number corresponded to the UN definition, it included statutory rape.

The eight other countries that reported to both the UN and Interpol tended to report higher rates to the UN, suggesting that they did not include statutory rape in the number they reported to Interpol.

In any comparison of rape rates, two underlying factors must be noted, even though they cannot be quantified. One is the degree of freedom and independence women have within a society and, consequently, the degree of exposure they have to the possibility of rape. Another is the the extent to which stigma still attaches to a rape and the consequent reluctance victims may have to report the crime to authorities. The first factor may actually affect the volume of rape from one country to another. The second will not affect the total volume of rape but will affect the proportion of rape cases reported to the police. Both of these factors will tend to raise the reported rate of rape in developed countries, compared to some less developed nations.

*Robbery*

The Interpol definition of robbery is "robbery and violent theft." The UN definition is "the taking away of property from a person overcoming resistance by force or threat of force."

The United States defines robbery as "the taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or putting the victim in fear."

England and Wales reported to Interpol that their definition of aggravated theft, which is the sum of robbery and burglary, includes the crime of "going equipped for stealing." It is not clear if this crime is included in robbery or in burglary or is divided between the two.

Czechoslovakia reported to the UN that robbery and crimes of theft refer only to crimes against individuals and individually owned property. Robbery or theft in Czechoslovakia involving socially owned property is classified in a separate category. As a result, robbery and theft rates in Czechoslovakia

are strikingly lower than those for other countries (table 7).

The robbery rate reported to the UN for Chile, 403, is extremely high, while its reported theft rate, which includes minor offenses, is rather low, 404 (appendix table). The fact that they are also practically the same suggests the possibility of error. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that the robbery rate Chile reported to Interpol for 1980 was 24 per 100,000. Although its reported rates are less than half those of Chile, Colombia also reported a higher rate for robbery than for theft, but it did not report whether minor theft was included in the theft rate.

Approximately one-fourth of the countries reported the same or nearly the same robbery rates both to Interpol and to the UN.

*Burglary and auto theft*

Since the UN groups all of its crimes of theft into one category, it has no statistics for burglary or auto theft. The Interpol definition of burglary is "breaking and entering." The U.S. definition is "the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft. The use of force to gain entry is not required to classify an offense as a burglary."

Interpol defines auto theft as "theft of motor cars." The U.S. definition includes theft of any motor vehicle that is self-propelled and runs on a surface instead of rails. This includes motorcycles, motor scooters, and the like; however, the overwhelming number of U.S. motor vehicle thefts are thefts of autos or trucks.

Probably the most important factor in motor vehicle theft is the number of motor vehicles per capita in the country. Developed nations in which automobile ownership is widespread generally had the highest rates of auto theft (table 4).

**Table 7. Robbery in selected countries, rates for 1980: UN and Interpol data**

| Country | Number of robberies per 100,000 population | |
|---|---|---|
| | UN | Interpol |
| United States | 240.9 | 244.0 |
| Australia | ... | 56.6 |
| Austria | 12.6 | 30.5 |
| Belgium | ... | 32.5 |
| Belize | 29.9 | ... |
| Canada | 102.1 | 103.7 |
| Chile | 403.4 | 23.5 |
| Colombia | 191.8 | 36.7 |
| Costa Rica | 82.2 | 21.8 |
| Czechoslovakia | 5.3 | ... |
| Denmark | 28.3 | 28.5 |
| Ecuador | ... | 8.9* |
| England and Wales | 30.2 | 30.5 |
| Finland | 39.1 | 40.9 |
| France | 9.8 | 65.8 |
| Germany (FRG) | 38.5 | 39.3 |
| Greece | .8 | .7 |
| Hungary | ... | 9.6 |
| India | ... | 3.5 |
| Indonesia | ... | 8.2 |
| Ireland | 39.2 | 33.4 |
| Italy | 7.6 | 18.6* |
| Japan | ... | 1.9 |
| Monaco | ... | 11.1 |
| Netherlands | 30.0 | 30.1 |
| New Zealand | ... | 9.0 |
| Nigeria | ... | 4.3 |
| Northern Ireland | ... | 84.2 |
| Norway | 8.3 | ... |
| Panama | 14.3 | ... |
| Peru | ... | 19.3 |
| Philippines | ... | 13.9 |
| Poland | .7 | ... |
| Portugal | 16.5 | 18.3* |
| Scotland | 72.3 | 72.2 |
| Spain | 73.2 | 63.6 |
| Sweden | 41.2 | 41.2 |
| Venezuela | ... | 149.0 |
| Yugoslavia | 4.5 | ... |

*1981 data.
Sources: United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey; U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987; Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80.

*Theft*

The UN definition of theft is an encompassing one: "the stealthy taking away of property without the owner's consent, including burglary and housebreaking. It includes theft of a motor vehicle, and both simple and aggravated theft as defined by the criminal law of each country. Shoplifting and other minor offences, for example, pilfering and petty theft, may be included or not according to the usual practice of each country."

Minor theft, when it is included in a country's theft data, constitutes the bulk of this crime. Only two countries reporting theft to the UN indicated that it did not include minor thefts in this category. Nine of the 26 countries reporting theft did not say whether they included minor theft, making their data difficult to assess. Two countries --Finland and Poland--did not include auto theft in their general theft category.

**Table 8. Homicide in selected countries, rates for 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of actual homicides per 100,000 population | | | | | Number of attempted and actual homicides per 100,000 population | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 |
| United States[a] | 10.0 | 9.8[b] | 9.1[b] | 8.3 | 7.9 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Australia | 2.5 | 2.5 | ... | ... | ... | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 3.4 |
| Austria | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| Belgium | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 1.3 | ... | 2.9 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 3.3 |
| Canada | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 6.0 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| Chile | 5.7 | 6.4 | 5.8 | 5.0 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 6.3 | 5.5 | 6.3 |
| Colombia | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2.0 | 1.9 | 2.2 | 30.2 | 2.5 |
| Costa Rica | 4.5 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 6.5 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Denmark | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 5.8 | 5.0 | 5.8 |
| Ecuador | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | .2 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 4.5 |
| Egypt | 2.1 | ... | ... | .9 | 1.0 | 2.2 | ... | ... | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| England and Wales | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.1 | ... | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.4 | ... |
| Finland | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 6.4 | 6.1 | 5.6 |
| France | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3.9 | ... | ... | 4.7 | 4.6 |
| Germany (FRG) | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Greece | .7 | .6 | .8 | .8 | 1.0 | .9 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| Hungary | ... | ... | ... | 1.9 | 1.9 | 3.5 | ... | ... | 3.8 | 3.7 |
| India | 3.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Indonesia | .5 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.4 | .9 |
| Ireland | ... | ... | ... | 1.0 | .8 | .6 | .7 | ... | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| Italy | ... | 1.4 | 2.5 | 2.1 | ... | ... | 3.3 | 4.4 | 5.3 | ... |
| Japan | .8 | .8 | .8 | .8 | .8 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Luxembourg | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 7.4 | 5.3 |
| Monaco | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3.7 | ... | ... | ... |
| Netherlands | ... | ... | .7 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 10.7 | 10.6 | 10.6 | 11.2 | ... |
| New Zealand | 1.7 | 1.9 | ... | 1.9 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 2.4 | ... | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| Nigeria | ... | ... | ... | 1.5 | ... | 3.0 | ... | ... | 1.7 | ... |
| Northern Ireland | 6.0 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 4.0 | ... | 23.1 | 37.6 | 24.0 | 19.8 | ... |
| Norway | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | .8 | .7 | 1.1 | .9 | ... |
| Peru | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2.2 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Philippines | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 13.4 | 31.8 | ... | 43.4 | 42.5 |
| Portugal | ... | 1.6 | ... | 2.8 | 3.0 | ... | 3.2 | ... | 4.6 | 4.6 |
| Scotland | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1.3 | ... | ... | ... | 1.4 |
| Spain | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1.2 | ... | 1.1 | 1.8 | 2.2 |
| Sweden | 1.6 | 1.8 | ... | 1.5 | 1.4 | 4.7 | 4.9 | ... | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| Switzerland | ... | ... | ... | 1.4 | 1.1 | ... | ... | ... | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| Thailand | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 18.3 | 16.6 |
| Venezuela | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 13.5 | 11.0 | 11.6 | 12.5 | 9.9 |

Note: Homicide rates excluding attempts were calculated from original data wherever possible.
...Not available.

[a]The United States classifies all attempted homicides as assaults.
[b]Not reported by Interpol; number is from the FBI, Crime in the United States, 1982.

Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84.

## Comparing rates over time

Because of all of the definitional and reporting difficulties noted above, directly comparing the crime rate of one country to that of another is often problematical. Yet, if the international reporting of crime rates is to have any usefulness at all, it must be in describing crime trends. The ability to say with some confidence that the rate of crime as reported to law enforcement authorities is rising in one country, while falling in another and remaining basically unchanged in a third, is a fairly minimal expectation from international crime rates.

Examining a country's crime rates for the same crime over several years is another way of assessing the reliability of the measurements. Rates that inspire a higher degree of confidence are those that vary slightly from one year to another or those that seem to show a definite trend throughout the period, such as the U.S. homicide rate (table 8).

Rates that vary sharply from year to year highlight the danger of citing a rate for only 1 year and suggest that, at a minimum, different respondents were reporting for the country during the period. On the other hand, rates that are identical throughout the 5-year period, while they may be entirely accurate, should be viewed with caution.

Fewer countries could report actual homicide rates for 1980-85 than could report actual and attempted homicides combined. Since the user cannot know from reports to Interpol what each country includes in attempted homicide, the direction of the trend is probably more important than the absolute level of the rate.

The total homicide rates for most countries did not show a definite trend but varied within what seemed to be

**Table 9. Rape in selected countries, rates for 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of rapes per 100,000 population | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 |
| United States | 36.0 | 35.6* | 33.6* | 33.7 | 35.7 |
| Australia | 7.7 | 8.8 | 10.1 | 11.8 | 13.8 |
| Austria | 5.2 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 5.1 | 5.3 |
| Belgium | .7 | .8 | 6.4 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| Canada | 14.1 | 14.6 | 10.3 | ... | ... |
| Chile | 12.1 | 11.8 | 10.5 | 10.8 | 10.6 |
| Colombia | 6.0 | 5.9 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.4 |
| Costa Rica | 9.9 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Denmark | 7.0 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 9.9 | 7.7 |
| Ecuador | ... | .6 | 2.4 | 5.6 | 5.9 |
| England and Wales | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | ... |
| Finland | 7.7 | 8.7 | 7.6 | 6.1 | 6.5 |
| France | 3.5 | ... | ... | 5.2 | 5.2 |
| Germany (FRG) | 11.2 | 11.2 | 10.9 | 11.0 | 9.7 |
| Greece | 1.0 | .4 | 1.0 | 1.1 | .9 |
| Hungary | 4.4 | ... | ... | 5.8 | 6.1 |
| India | .7 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Indonesia | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Ireland | 1.4 | 1.5 | ... | 1.7 | 2.0 |
| Italy | ... | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.8 | ... |
| Japan | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.0 | 1.7 | 1.8 |
| Luxembourg | ... | ... | ... | 2.5 | 2.8 |
| Netherlands | 5.6 | 6.0 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 7.2 |
| New Zealand | 9.6 | ... | ... | 9.8 | 14.4 |
| Nigeria | 4.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Northern Ireland | 4.2 | 4.1 | 5.3 | 5.0 | ... |
| Norway | 3.2 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 4.2 | ... |
| Peru | 12.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Philippines | 1.2 | ... | ... | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| Portugal | ... | 1.5 | ... | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Scotland | 3.2 | ... | ... | ... | 4.4 |
| Spain | 2.3 | ... | 2.4 | 2.9 | 3.6 |
| Sweden | 10.6 | 10.4 | ... | 11.1 | 11.9 |
| Switzerland | ... | ... | ... | 6.1 | 5.8 |
| Thailand | ... | ... | ... | 5.2 | 5.3 |
| Venezuela | 15.6 | 16.5 | 16.6 | 17.2 | 17.4 |

...Not available.
*Not reported by Interpol; number is from the FBI, Crime in the United States, 1982.

Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84.

**Table 10. Robbery in selected countries, rates for 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of robberies per 100,000 population | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 |
| United States | 244.0 | 250.6* | 231.9* | 216.5 | 205.4 |
| Australia | 56.6 | 32.0 | 63.6 | 80.8 | 83.6 |
| Austria | 30.5 | 34.5 | 35.1 | 28.7 | 29.8 |
| Belgium | 32.2 | 34.7 | 43.9 | 43.1 | 50.0 |
| Canada | 103.7 | 109.4 | 110.7 | 97.6 | 92.8 |
| Chile | 23.5 | 24.3 | 22.2 | 43.4 | 36.4 |
| Colombia | 36.7 | 36.2 | 41.1 | 37.8 | 32.8 |
| Costa Rica | 21.6 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Denmark | 28.5 | 29.9 | 27.5 | 29.8 | 35.6 |
| Ecuador | ... | 8.9 | 29.9 | 27.3 | 27.8 |
| Egypt | ... | ... | ... | .3 | .4 |
| England and Wales | 30.5 | 41.1 | 46.0 | 44.6 | ... |
| Finland | 40.9 | 40.8 | 39.7 | 35.7 | 33.7 |
| France | 65.8 | ... | ... | 93.6 | 105.6 |
| Germany (FRG) | 39.3 | 44.9 | 49.4 | 48.1 | 45.8 |
| Greece | .7 | .9 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 2.3 |
| Hungary | 9.6 | ... | ... | 12.7 | 15.5 |
| India | 3.5 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Indonesia | 8.2 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 7.7 | 5.1 |
| Ireland | 33.4 | 39.0 | ... | 65.8 | 54.6 |
| Italy | ... | 18.6 | 22.9 | 35.7 | ... |
| Japan | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.8 |
| Luxembourg | ... | ... | ... | 46.2 | 40.8 |
| Monaco | 11.1 | 29.6 | 39.8 | 25.2 | 43.2 |
| Netherlands | 30.1 | 38.1 | 46.4 | 47.8 | 52.9 |
| New Zealand | 9.0 | ... | ... | 9.9 | 14.9 |
| Nigeria | 4.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Northern Ireland | 84.2 | 176.5 | 127.3 | 119.3 | ... |
| Peru | 19.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Philippines | 13.9 | ... | ... | 28.9 | 33.0 |
| Portugal | ... | 18.3 | ... | 20.7 | 21.6 |
| Scotland | 72.2 | ... | ... | ... | 86.9 |
| Spain | 63.6 | ... | 58.1 | 102.6 | 147.3 |
| Sweden | 41.2 | 38.8 | ... | 41.7 | 44.1 |
| Switzerland | ... | ... | ... | 24.7 | 24.2 |
| Thailand | ... | ... | ... | 11.4 | 10.0 |
| Venezuela | 149.0 | 125.6 | 151.8 | 194.8 | 161.0 |

...Not available.
*Not reported by Interpol; number is from the FBI, Crime in the United States, 1982.

Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84.

reasonable limits. Colombia's 1983 homicide rate was about 12 times higher than the rates for adjacent years, almost certainly a reporting error. The total homicide rate for the Philippines more than tripled over the 5-year period. Ecuador's rate, starting at an unusually low level, increased by a factor greater than 20 in 3 years.

Most countries reported rates for rape that varied within narrow limits or showed reasonable trends (table 9). Ecuador's rape rate, however, increased by a factor of nearly 10 in 3 years. Such large increases in a short time as Ecuador experienced both for rape and for homicide suggest changes in reporting practices or in definitions or possibly an expansion in geographic coverage within the country.

Robbery rates over the 5-year period did not show the stability exhibited by the rates for rape (table 10). The robbery rate for Spain doubled in 5 years. Several other European countries showed large increases during a time when the U.S. rate was decreasing. Ecuador experienced an apparent discontinuity in robbery rates between 1981 and 1982, again suggesting that some of the factors mentioned above were operative.

Burglary rates decreased for the United States and Canada between 1980 and 1984 (table 11). For most other countries, however, they increased, sometimes sharply. The burglary rate in the Netherlands nearly doubled in 4 years, and the rate for Spain nearly tripled. Both Greece and Indonesia showed sharp discontinuities in their series between 1980 and 1981.

Few countries showed persistent trends in rates for auto theft throughout the 5-year period, although rates for many countries moved sharply from year to year (table 12). The United States, Canada, Venezuela, and Monaco showed decreasing rates. Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden all had increasing rates over the period. Hungary showed an apparent break in its series between 1983 and 1984.

## Conclusion

One conclusion to be drawn from the international comparison of crime rates is that it is risky to quote a crime rate for a particular country for a particular year without examining rates for other years, and, whenever possible, rates from other sources. Crime rates are frequently twice as much or half as much as those for an adjacent year or from a different series. By extension, it is also risky to compare crime rates for two or more countries without looking at several years and at other sources.

The biggest barrier to comparing crime rates may well be the apprehension produced within countries at the thought of some numerical ranking. Interpol has attempted to calm fears of member countries by stating firmly in the introduction to each edition of

**Table 11. Burglary in selected countries, rates for 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of burglaries per 100,000 population | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 |
| United States | 1,669.0 | 1,632.1[a] | 1,475.2[a] | 1,337.7 | 1,263.7 |
| Australia | 1,268.3 | 896.1 | 1,538.2 | 1,748.5 | 1,754.3 |
| Austria | 746.3 | 874.1 | 893.2 | 843.0 | 805.8 |
| Belgium | 504.8 | 599.2 | 695.4 | 705.2 | ... |
| Canada | 1,497.1 | 1,552.6 | 1,501.6 | 1,456.2 | 1,420.6 |
| Denmark | 1,893.9 | 1,837.6 | 1,943.4 | 2,052.3 | 2,230.2 |
| Ecuador | ... | 28.6 | ... | ... | ... |
| Egypt | 9.2 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| England and Wales | 1,264.4 | 1,465.3 | 1,634.0 | 1,839.7 | ... |
| Finland | ... | 762.1 | 808.1 | 762.8 | 772.6 |
| France | 512.0 | ... | ... | 735.5 | 809.8 |
| Germany (FRG) | 1,188.3 | 1,319.7 | 1,450.1 | 1,535.4 | 1,554.1 |
| Greece[b] | .2 | 67.0 | 76.8 | 68.5 | 72.8 |
| Hungary | 147.7 | ... | ... | 184.6 | 211.0 |
| India | 24.4 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Indonesia | 3.5 | 62.4 | 53.4 | 46.1 | 38.4 |
| Ireland | 647.2 | 735.4 | ... | 1,065.0 | 1,056.8 |
| Italy | ... | 48.2 | 44.6 | ... | ... |
| Japan | 248.3 | 255.8 | 254.6 | 249.1 | 251.2 |
| Luxembourg | ... | ... | ... | 504.8 | 509.8 |
| Monaco | 433.3 | 292.6 | 590.1 | 590.4 | 500.0 |
| Netherlands | 1,219.1 | 1,512.5 | 1,754.0 | 1,954.4 | 2,328.7 |
| New Zealand | 1,729.8 | ... | ... | 2,269.9 | 2,243.1 |
| Nigeria | 16.0 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Northern Ireland | 1,275.8 | 1,324.8 | 1,390.2 | 1,360.7 | ... |
| Peru | 255.1 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Portugal | ... | 86.0 | ... | 87.0 | 99.7 |
| Scotland | 1,522.3 | ... | ... | ... | 2,178.6 |
| Spain | 357.4 | ... | 440.8 | 784.1 | 1,069.9 |
| Sweden | 1,682.4 | 1,648.1 | ... | 1,678.0 | 1,708.8 |
| Switzerland | ... | ... | ... | 1,069.4 | 976.8 |
| Thailand | ... | ... | ... | 8.8 | 8.7 |
| Venezuela | 271.3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |

...Not available.
[a]Not reported by Interpol; number is from the FBI, Crime in the United States, 1982.
[b]It is not known why the 1980 rate of .2 is so much lower than the rates for 1981-84. It is likely an error.
Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84.

**Table 12. Auto theft in selected countries, rates for 1980-84: Interpol data**

| Country | Number of auto thefts per 100,000 population | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 |
| United States | 495.0 | 468.7* | 452.8* | 430.8 | 437.1 |
| Australia | 399.2 | 432.0 | 533.8 | 586.2 | 584.7 |
| Austria | 18.0 | 21.1 | 19.5 | 17.2 | 16.9 |
| Belgium | 66.5 | 78.2 | 127.8 | 134.6 | 140.6 |
| Canada | 436.7 | 442.8 | 353.2 | 305.4 | 304.9 |
| Chile | 7.8 | 8.0 | 9.5 | 11.8 | 7.8 |
| Colombia | 11.0 | 15.3 | 16.5 | 14.3 | 14.2 |
| Denmark | 411.0 | 391.1 | 394.8 | 426.9 | 469.5 |
| Ecuador | ... | 11.1 | 1.9 | 3.3 | 7.8 |
| Egypt | 1.9 | ... | ... | 2.7 | 3.3 |
| England and Wales | 658.7 | 673.9 | 708.1 | 656.6 | ... |
| Finland | 163.1 | 168.8 | 168.2 | 177.1 | 171.7 |
| France | 398.9 | ... | ... | 465.3 | 483.4 |
| Germany (FRG) | 104.2 | 116.6 | 127.4 | 130.6 | 118.0 |
| Greece | .3 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Hungary | 34.9 | ... | ... | 38.1 | 4.0 |
| Indonesia | 3.5 | 4.8 | 6.4 | 5.3 | 4.9 |
| Ireland | 15.2 | 19.2 | ... | 31.8 | 29.7 |
| Italy | ... | 230.8 | 209.1 | 276.3 | ... |
| Japan | 27.6 | 28.4 | 28.2 | 29.1 | 29.4 |
| Luxembourg | ... | ... | ... | 121.8 | 109.3 |
| Monaco | 222.2 | 203.7 | 213.6 | 194.4 | 176.3 |
| Netherlands | 102.6 | 119.9 | 135.0 | 138.2 | 155.9 |
| Northern Ireland | 349.3 | 87.7 | 85.8 | 106.2 | ... |
| Norway | 177.5 | 216.7 | 249.4 | 273.1 | ... |
| Peru | 11.9 | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Philippines | ... | ... | ... | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Portugal | ... | 49.2 | ... | 57.8 | 61.3 |
| Scotland | 525.5 | ... | ... | ... | 632.7 |
| Spain | 214.6 | ... | 173.6 | 255.0 | 298.2 |
| Sweden | 412.4 | 393.0 | ... | 418.8 | 460.0 |
| Thailand | ... | ... | ... | 1.7 | 2.0 |
| Venezuela | 168.3 | 129.4 | 129.3 | 115.5 | 85.9 |

...Not available.
*Not reported by Interpol; number is from the FBI, Crime in the United States, 1982.
Source: Interpol, International Crime Statistics, vols. 1979-80, 1981-82, 1983-84.

International Crime Statistics that "the information given is in no way intended for use as a basis for comparisons between different countries."

The introduction continues: "Our statistics cannot take account of the differences that exist between the legal definitions of punishable offences in various countries, of the different methods of calculation, or of any changes which may have occurred in the countries concerned during the reference period. All these factors obviously have repercussions on the figures supplied. Police statistics reflect the crimes reported to or detected by the police and therefore cover only part of the total number of offenses actually committed. Moreover, the volume of unreported crime depends to some extent on action taken by the police, and may therefore vary from one point in time to another and from one country to another. Consequently, the figures given in these statistics must be interpreted with caution."

To make the international comparison of crime rates as meaningful as possible, the data gatherer and the data provider must take joint responsibility for assuring that complete explanatory notes are reported each year, minimizing the assumptions that users must make. Apparent errors must be examined and corrected if they are actually errors. The definitions of each crime reported by each country must be stated in full so that differences among countries may be taken into account. Wherever a country can show detail for a crime category, it should do so in order to facilitate comparison with countries that can report only part of that crime group. Finally, each country should report in full on the degree of geographical coverage its crime statistics represent. Only after these things have been accomplished will it be useful to begin looking at other causes of differences in crime rates among nations.

## Appendix: Country notes

*Interpol data*

Countries were asked to report both the total number of crimes and the percent of crimes that were attempts. Countries also reported their total population and their crime rates. Where the percentage of attempts was available for homicide, homicide rates were recalculated to obtain rates for completed homicides so that the rates would be comparable to those for the United States. Some homicide rates that included attempts were extremely low, suggesting that only actual homicides had been reported for total homicides.

Country notes were reported in each of the three International Crime Statistics volumes used in this report. When notes were given for a single year only, that year is noted in parentheses at the end of the note. If no year appears, then the note applies to all 5 years of data. The nature of some

notes strongly suggests that they apply to all 5 years of data, even though they appear only in certain years.

Only comments relating to the crimes presented in this report are shown below. Some countries may have reported comments relating to other crimes.

**Australia.** The Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, and South Australia do not record attempted crimes. The Northern Territory and Queensland record attempted crimes for murder; Western Australia, for murder and rape; Victoria, for murder, rape, and car theft; Tasmania, for all crimes. The Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, and Victoria do not record robbery or burglary. Western Australia does not record auto theft.

**Belgium.** Percentage of attempted homicides not shown in 1984.

**Colombia.** Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Costa Rica.** Data supplied for 1980 only.

**Ecuador.** No data supplied for 1980. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Egypt.** No data supplied for 1981 or 1982.

**England and Wales.** The crimes of robbery and burglary may each include some number of the crime of "going equipped for stealing" (1980-82).

**Finland.** Homicide includes manslaughter (1981-84). Auto theft includes "taking and driving away" (1981-84).

**France.** No data reported for 1981 and 1982. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Greece.** Automobile theft not shown separately (1981-84).

**Hungary.** No data reported for 1981 and 1982. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown for 1980.

**India.** Data reported for 1980 only. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Indonesia.** Percentage of attempted homicides shown for 1980 only.

**Ireland.** No data shown for 1982. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown for 1980.

**Italy.** No data shown for 1980.

**Japan.** Homicide includes preparation for the commission of a homicide and participation in a suicide (1980). When inflicted bodily injury results in death, the crime is classified as a serious assault and not as a homicide (1980).

**Luxembourg.** No data for 1980-82. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown for 1983 and 1984.

**Monaco.** Homicides given for 1981 only; percentage of attempted homicides not shown. "Account should be taken of the very large tourist population" (1980-82).

**Netherlands.** Percentage of attempted homicides not shown for 1980 or 1981. In 1984 only actual homicides were reported. The homicide rate for 1984 was reported as 12.26 per 100,000, but recalculation using reported homicides and the reported population produces a rate of 1.2 per 100,000.

**New Zealand.** No data reported for 1982.

**Appendix table. Crime rates in selected countries, 1980: United Nations data**

| Country | Number of crimes per 100,000 population: Homicide, Actual | Homicide, including attempts | Rape | Robbery | Theft |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 10.1 | ... | 36.0 | 240.9 | 5,262.2 |
| Austria | 1.0 | 2.2 | 7.5 | 12.6 | 2,074.0 |
| Belize | ... | 16.3 | 17.7 | 29.9 | 1,527.9 |
| Canada | 2.1 | 5.4 | 9.6 | 102.1 | 5,071.5 |
| Chile | ... | 13.8 | 34.2 | 403.4 | 404.1 |
| Colombia | 2.3 | 7.3 | 8.6 | 191.8 | 138.7 |
| Costa Rica | 2.7 | 5.8 | 13.5 | 82.2 | 183.7 |
| Czechoslovakia | ... | .7 | 2.9 | 5.3 | 46.9 |
| Denmark | 1.5 | 4.6 | 6.3 | 28.5 | 4,417.2 |
| England and Wales | 1.2 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 30.2 | 4,148.8 |
| Finland | 2.4 | 5.3 | 7.7 | 39.1 | 2,116.2 |
| France | ... | ... | 3.5 | 9.0 | 2,983.6 |
| Germany (FRG) | 1.4 | 4.4 | 11.2 | 38.5 | 3,960.0 |
| Greece | ... | 1.2 | 5.3 | .8 | 184.1 |
| Ireland | .4 | .6 | 1.4 | 39.2 | 1,159.8 |
| Italy | 2.0 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 7.6 | 301.4 |
| Netherlands | ... | 10.6 | 5.6 | 30.0 | 569.5 |
| Northern Ireland | 5.6 | 22.6 | 3.1 | ... | 1,837.8 |
| Norway | ... | .8 | 3.2 | 8.3 | 2,420.2 |
| Panama | ... | 9.6 | 10.2 | 14.3 | 180.1 |
| Poland | 1.4 | 1.8 | 4.4 | .7 | 515.2 |
| Portugal | 1.8 | 3.7 | 1.2 | 16.5 | 233.1 |
| Scotland | 1.1 | 6.6 | 5.9 | 72.3 | 4,998.3 |
| Spain | ... | .1 | 2.5 | 73.2 | 1,093.2 |
| Sweden | 1.6 | 4.7 | 10.6 | 41.2 | 6,186.9 |
| Yugoslavia | ... | 6.1 | 8.5 | 4.5 | 392.4 |

...Not available.
Sources: United Nations, Second United Nations Crime Survey; U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987.

**Nigeria.** No data reported for 1981, 1982, and 1984. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown for 1980.

**Norway.** No data shown for 1984. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Peru.** Data reported for 1980 only. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Philippines.** No data shown for 1982. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Portugal.** Data not reported for 1980 and 1982.

**Scotland.** No data given for 1981-83. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**Spain.** Data not reported for 1981. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown. Auto theft includes unlawful usage of a car without owner's permission (1980, 1982, and 1983).

**Sweden.** Data not reported for 1982.

**Switzerland.** Data reported only for 1983 and 1984. Auto theft includes theft of motorcycles and bicycles (1983-84) and has been excluded from the tables.

**Thailand.** Data reported only for 1983 and 1984. Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

**United States.** Data not reported for 1981 and 1982. Separate attempt statistics are only available for rape and breaking and entering (1980). Auto theft includes theft of any motor vehicle that is self-propelled and runs on the surface and not on rails (1980). (Note: The comments do not mention that homicide as defined in the United States does not include attempts.)

Crime statistics for a number of cases known to the police include the estimated total number of offenses reported to all U.S. agencies. Because some law enforcement agencies are not able to provide data or do not provide data for all 12 months of a year, estimated or extrapolated crime counts for such agencies are used.

The total U.S. population used to compute the crime rates for the volume of crime per 100,000 inhabitants was based upon census preliminary estimated counts for the nationwide residential population. This population figure may differ significantly from the actual U.S. population.

**Venezuela.** Percentage of attempted homicides not shown.

*United Nations data*

Crime rates for UN data were computed using population statistics from the "Comparative International Statistics" section of the 1987 Statistical Abstract of the United States.

Countries were instructed to provide a count of total crimes for each crime type reported and a count for attempts only. Some countries reported a number for attempted homicide that was larger than the number reported for total homicide. When this was the case, it was assumed that the number reported as the total was the number of completed murders, and rates for actual homicide were computed on that basis. Further, in these cases the number reported for total homicide and the number reported for attempted homicide were combined into "actual and attempted homicide," and a rate was computed for that number. For

those countries that reported a total count for homicide but no count for attempted homicide, crime rates for the total were computed and shown in the tables as "actual and attempted homicide."

Countries were requested to indicate whether their reported number of total thefts included a count of minor thefts; some countries did not provide this information.

**Austria.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Belize.** Rape includes indecent assault. Theft excludes minor offenses.

**Canada.** Total homicides reported were 496; attempted homicides reported, 792. Theft includes minor offenses.

**Chile.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Colombia.** Total homicides reported were 618; attempted homicides reported, 1,302. No information given on minor thefts.

**Costa Rica.** No information given on minor thefts.

**Czechoslovakia.** A rape resulting in the unintentional death of the victim is classified as a rape, not a homicide. Robbery and theft include only crimes against individuals and individually owned property. Robbery or theft involving property in socialist ownership is classified separately. Theft excludes minor offenses.

**Denmark.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**England.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Finland.** Rape excludes statutory rape. Theft includes minor offenses but excludes auto theft.

**France.** Homicide includes unintentional homicides. No information given on minor thefts.

**Germany (FRG).** Homicide includes unintentional homicides. No information given on minor thefts.

**Greece.** The rape category includes lewdness, sodomy, seduction of a child, incest, prostitution, and procuring. Theft includes minor offenses.

**Ireland.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Italy.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Netherlands.** Homicide includes unintentional homicide. There is no crime category called robbery; reported in this category are thefts in which violence was used. No information given on minor thefts.

**Northern Ireland.** Total homicides reported were 88; attempted homicides reported, 264. No information given on minor thefts.

**Norway.** No information given on minor thefts.

**Panama.** No information given on minor thefts.

**Poland.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Portugal.** Theft includes minor offenses but excludes auto theft.

**Scotland.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**Sweden.** Theft includes minor offenses.

**United States.** Homicides do not include attempts. Rape excludes statutory rape. Thefts include minor offenses.

**Yugoslavia.** No information given on minor thefts.

•U.S. G.P.O. 1988-202-045:80046

**New from BJS**

- BJS data report, 1987, NCJ-110643, 5/88
- Prisoners in 1987 (BJS Bulletin), NCJ-110331, 4/88
- Bureau of Justice Statistics annual report, fiscal 1987, NCJ-109928, 4/88
- Motor vehicle theft (BJS Special Report), NCJ-109978, 3/88
- National Crime Survey preliminary data for 1987 (press release), 3/88
- Drunk driving (BJS Special Report), NCJ-109945, 2/88
- Felony laws of the 50 States and the District of Columbia,1986, $14.70 postpaid, NCJ-105066, 2/88, 354 pp.
- Correctional populations in the United States, 1985, NCJ-103957, 2/88
- Data center & clearinghouse for drugs & crime (brochure), BC-000092, 2/88
- Drugs and crime: A guide to BJS data, NCJ-109956, 2/88
- Pretrial release and detention: The Bail Reform Act of 1984 (BJS Special Report), NCJ-109929, 2/88
- Profile of State prison inmates, 1986 (BJS Special Report), NCJ-109926, 1/88
- Tracking offenders, 1984 (BJS Bulletin), NCJ-109686, 1/88

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